REV. ROBERT COLLYER

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A MEMORIAL

of the

Rev. Robert Collyer, D.D., Litt.D.

Late Minister of the

Unitarian Church of the Messiah

New York City

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Robert Collyer

Born in Keighley, England
December 8, 1823

Minister of Unity Church, Chicago, 1862-1879.

Minister of the Unitarian Church of the Messiah, New York, 1879-1912.

"He held fast to the things which are good."

Died in New York, N. Y.
November 30, 1912

"....And he was not, for God took him."

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Collyer, through more than thirty-three years the honored minister of the Church of the Messiah in New York, the revered father in the spirit of two full generations of its worshipers, and the beloved friend of a host of men and women in this country and in England, passed away on November 30, 1912, in the eighty-ninth year of his age.

On his return to his home in September, after the summer vacation season in Gloucester, Dr. Collyer seemed to be in that unvarying condition of good health and abounding vitality which had long been the wonder of all those who knew him. He showed his usual keen interest in the affairs of the church, took his accustomed part in the Sunday services, and went about the daily routine which he had followed year in and year out for well-nigh half a century. Suddenly, on the first day of November, he was stricken. After the initial collapse, he seemed to rally for a little time, but the indications of recovery were deceptive. On Wednesday, November 6th, he took to his bed, and slowly, by almost imperceptible degrees from day to day, faded away. At last, close to midnight on Saturday, the 30th, he died. No lines of pain were on his quiet face, no slightest trace of struggle disturbed his last hours of mortal slumber. He " fell on sleep " as sweetly and gently as a tired child at the end of a long and happy day. Like Enoch of old time, he simply " was not, for God took him."

On Monday, December 2d, after private prayers in the home, Dr. Collyer's body was placed in the church, and all who would were permitted to look upon his noble countenance. On Tuesday morning a public funeral was held in the church in the presence of a great company of friends. The services were conducted by Mr. Holmes, and addresses were given by Dr. Frank Oliver Hall, of the Church of the Divine Paternity, Dr. Merle St. Croix Wright, of the Lenox Avenue Unitarian Church, and Mr. Holmes. On the following Sunday, December 8th — which by a beautiful coincidence marked Dr. Collyer's eighty-ninth birthday — the regular service of worship was made a Memorial in his honor. Still later, on Tuesday, December 18th, a memorial meeting was held by the Robert Collyer Men's Club, at which addresses were delivered by Mr. J. Burnet Nash, Dr. S. Adolphus Knopf, Rev. Leon A. Harvey, Rev. William M. Brundage, and Mr. Holmes.

By vote of the Board of Trustees, a committee was appointed, under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Adolphus Knopf, to prepare and publish a permanent record of these services and meetings. The committee have fulfilled this honorable duty, and respectfully present this volume to the members of the church and the friends of Dr. Collyer.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Held at the Church of the Messiah, New York City, on December 3, 1912, *at* 10 A. M.

HYMN

"O worship the King, all-glorious above!
O gratefully sing his power and his love!
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space!
His chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form,
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plains,
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rains.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!"

READINGS

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

PRAISE ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels. Praise ye him, all his host. Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him,

ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them forever and ever. He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapors; stormy wind, fulfilling his word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, he is God. It is he that made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: give thanks unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his lovingkindness endureth forever, and his faithfulness unto all generations.

Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Mark the perfect man,

and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

. . . And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Why mourn we for our ancient friend? Behold, I say unto you that God created man to be immortal. He made him in the image of his own eternity. The souls of men are in the hands of God, and there shall no evil touch them. In the sight of the unwise, they seem to die; and their going from us is thought to be destruction. But they are in peace, for their hope is full of immortality. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall dwell with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Bless the Lord, O my soul, whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

"Why mourn ye that our aged friend is dead?
Ye are not sad to see the gathered grain:
Nor when the mellow fruits the orchards cast,
Nor when the yellow woods let fall the ripened mast.

"Ye sigh not when the sun, his course fulfilled —
His glorious course, rejoicing earth and sky —
In the soft evening, when the winds are stilled,
Sinks where his islands of refreshment lie,
And leaves the smile of his departure spread
O'er the warm-colored heaven and ruddy mountain-head.

"Why weep ye then for him, who, having won
The bound of man's appointed years, at last,
Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labor done,
Serenely to his final rest has passed;
While the soft memory of his virtues yet
Lingers, like twilight hues when the bright sun is set.

"His youth was innocent; his riper age
Marked with some act of goodness every day;
And watched by eyes that loved him, calm and sage,
Faded his late declining years away:
Meekly he gave his being up and went
To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent.

"That life was happy; every day he gave
Thanks for the fair existence that was his;
For a sick fancy made him not her slave,
To mock him with her phantom miseries.

No chronic tortures racked his aged limbs,
For luxury and sloth had nourished none for him.

"And I am glad that he has lived thus long,
And glad that he has gone to his reward;
Nor can I deem that Nature did him wrong,
Softly to disengage the vital cord;
For when his hands grew palsied, and his eye
Dark with the mists of age, it was his time to die."

HYMN

"Oh, sometimes gleams upon our sight,
Through present wrong, the eternal Right;
And step by step, since time began,
We see the steady gain of man.

That all of good the past hath had
Remains to make our own time glad,
Our common, daily life divine,
And every land a Palestine.

Through the harsh noises of our day,
A low, sweet prelude finds it way;
Through clouds of doubt, and creeds of fear,
A light is breaking calm and clear.

Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore:
God's love and blessing, then and there,
Are now and here and everywhere.

ADDRESS

BY MERLE ST. CROIX WRIGHT

ROBERT COLLYER was like a great oak of his native land, destined seemingly to stand forever, which all men regard with delight. The last time I saw him, and perhaps his last public appearance, was in Gloucester toward September, at the meeting of the Ministers' Institute, where he spoke a kind of farewell to the world, loving words of reminiscence (and what fitter theme), glorying in the faith and rejoicing in the fellowship. The first time I saw him was in this city almost thirty years ago. How much is changed since then! Through the present minister I see the shadows of his predecessors: Farley and Putnam, Camp, Chadwick, Williams; and around them the goodly company of their supporters, who held up their hands in the long fight for righteousness. And "Mother Collyer!" Who that was present does not remember the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the pastor of this church. He seemed to be growing older till that time, but younger afterwards: the first the grief of earth and the body's burden; the second a translation in the spirit, wherein we all ascended. And now he is eighty-nine! rival to Martineau, and to Furness, his dear friend, who both neared ninety-five; sign, as we believe, of the rightness of their lives and the vitality of their minds.

My first official connection with him was twenty-five years ago, when, upon settling in this city, I came into the rumor of his recent sermon to my people-elect, upon "The Faithful 29,"— the exact number, though he

did not then know it — of men, women, and children, "all souls" all told, present at the reorganization of the new Society. At my ordination that December he gave the right hand of fellowship, ending with the characteristic words "Now let us shake again," and Dr. Furness, first of his noble line, preached the sermon. Dr. Collyer helped in raising money for my church in those first years, though I remember his hard saying to me in that hard time, "You'll have to wait a year! No good thing was ever done in a hurry!"

Robert Collyer was a great yeoman of religion, the Great Commoner — to whom nothing was common or unclean in itself! A national figure, through his lectures, "Clear Grit" and others, delivered round the land.

He presented Humanity, did more than stand for Man,— busily, even fussily, as some do. He was Man. He was beloved by other denominations: to them he spoke with authority; they heard him gladly, for he could say like the old woman of his story when asked: "What denomination do you belong to?" "I don't belong to *no domination!*" With all his big body, HE WAS A SOUL; his was a spirit, a temper, a feeling: — the poetry of life and religion, let us call it; a ripe humanity — the word recurs. How he knew a man! and searched him, brusquely, abruptly, thoroughly yet tenderly, but, after all, with swift, slight survey, easy acceptance, large allowance. He wanted you sociable — a fellow-man; if sound and true, you *might* be stupid! Capricious he was, and had a highly personal way with him, but how benevolent and fatherly, gracious rather than genial, with a tart touch of reserve, as if his was a hard shell to get out of. And

sensitive? and shy? — perhaps he could most show his soul in public. Who that reads his "Father Taylor" does not know it? And a true friend! witness his words, and grief and joy without and beyond words, at John Chadwick's funeral. His tenderness, his wit, are known to all; his story-telling, never declining into "anecdotage"; his dramatic point. Also his loneliness! — To me congratulating him upon revisiting Yorkshire, his old home, he replied: "They are all gone, the folk I used to know; it is like walking among shadows upon graves." Yet what friendliness, companionableness; a great simplicity, if not approachableness; a patience, if not an easy affability; and glad, and brave, waiting it out, to life's end. Most eminent also was his mellow, reconciling quality, his mighty heart in prayer, his simple, sympathetic, comprehensive sense of presentation; a kind of domestic intimacy, a divine innocence; a holy, sunny joy, that bathed us in the light of love and trust, like an old nurse, or rather a real mother, of the spirit. He could *listen* as well as most men speak.

Here in this city he was *persona grata.* The old will well remember his friendship with Dr. Gottheil, Rabbi of Temple Emanuel, symbol of that alliance he formed with sound essential manhood everywhere. If not a bishop at large, he was *a bishop enlarged;* a patriarchal presence, perpetual benediction, as of the greater gods. A man, in sum, who held all gods in solution in his soul.

Finally, his worth to you measures his value to the world, for he was one man always, everywhere. Now he has folded his singing robes about him, and has gone,— after patiently enduring earth these many

years. There was clay in him, but less Adam's clay than Christ's; and if the first man was *a living soul,* the last shall ever be *a quickening spirit.* But yesterday afternoon an active minister, of another fellowship, was telling me how in Chicago after the great fire forty-five years ago, he heard Robert Collyer preach,— then a young man, in the full vigor of half these years,— standing outside the ruins of his church, against the single burnt and blackened wall remaining, and, at the close, invite them all to " Come again next Sunday! Our building's gone, God's roof is still above us." So let us think of him, as the angel in the church whose walls are the width of the world, whose dome is the height of the sky, whose call for progress is to all humanity.

As when a great oak falls, a space is made
  In heaven, and earth widens to the gaze
Though vacant; and much life must change its ways,
  And many miss this gratefulness of shade!
So slow its growth, so great its girth; though swayed
  By shock of storm and marred by waste of days,
So stalwart showed! — we lightly thought always
  It would be with us, and were not afraid.

Nor fear we now, who see its giant crest
  The heavens enter, rooted in our hearts!
Alas! the loss is for an after-age.
  Death's twilight depth a deeper truth imparts:
As through some minster window, facing west,
  The light still lingers on the gospel page.

ADDRESS

BY FRANK OLIVER HALL

WHEN word came on Sunday morning that Robert Collyer had "fallen on sleep," as he himself would say, there flashed into my mind the words of his teacher and ours, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Robert Collyer was a great man, but when that is said and the question is raised, "In what did his greatness consist?" one finds it extremely difficult to answer. His name will not be written among the great intellectual leaders of his time. Even if in his early days he had had all the opportunities of education, as we say, it is doubtful whether he could have attained to intellectual leadership. Measured by the popular standard of greatness in our time, that is, great possession, he falls short, and it is impossible to think that under different circumstances it would have been otherwise. We may imagine his blacksmith's hammer developing into a thousand trip-hammers and his poor forge into a mile of rolling mills, but I defy anyone to imagine Robert Collyer as a modern captain of industry. He does not fit into that picture. It is easy to imagine him in leather apron, sleeves rolled up, pounding a piece of hot iron into a horseshoe and thinking all the time, "That must be a good shoe to keep my neighbor's horse from slipping on the icy pavement," but no one can think of him as Chairman of a Board of Directors, sitting about a mahogany table, seeking for his own enrichment to regulate the price of horseshoes for a nation. If in-

stead of being a preacher he had tried politics, it is difficult to think of him in the House of Representatives, or even the Senate, or occupying any political office calling for large executive ability. He was not even a great orator, if you look for one whose words will arouse to a furor of enthusiasm. And so, if someone who never knew him should put us, his lovers, on the witness stand and cross question us who are sure that he was a great man, I fear we would make a sorry spectacle of ourselves.

And yet I am personally convinced that, as God counts greatness, he was the greatest man that I ever knew. Somehow the glory of his personality impressed itself upon those who met him, before he had said a word. He did not possess what we are accustomed to call an imposing personality — he never imposed himself upon anyone. Certainly his was not an intrusive personality, for he was the most modest of men. He possessed a pervasive personality. Having known him once, he became yours forever. This church is full of his presence to-day. Not one of us who does not feel that here he is in the midst of us. If someone should ask me suddenly how many times I had seen and talked with him during the past year, on the impulse of the moment, I would probably reply, "Every few days." As a matter of fact I have met him three times. It was his custom once a year to go to the Chapin Home and talk to the old folks and afterward take them by the hand. But if you were to speak of Dr. Collyer to these same old folks, you would feel sure that he must have been among them at least once a week and was the personal counselor and intimate friend of each one. The interesting fact is that these

old people think that true. The still more interesting fact is that it is true. He was and is the friend and counselor of these people, and what is more he will remain so. Carry the old body to Woodlawn and place it beneath the sod, but you can not get Robert Collyer out of Chapin Home, or out of this church, or out of this city. The power of his personality pervades us all.

He was a powerful man, but his power was not like the rushing river or like the tempestuous wind, it was like the power of the spring sun which shining upon the earth makes it bud and blossom and bear fruit.

I remember distinctly the first time that I ever saw him. It was many years ago in my youthful days. His fame had gone before, and so when it was announced that he would speak to a group of young men, I determined to be one of them and went prepared to be lifted and stirred and aroused to enthusiasm by the power of his eloquence. I remember that when I entered I thought him the handsomest man that I had ever seen and when he arose to speak I sat forward on my chair prepared to be electrified. Then he spread out a manuscript and began quietly to read. Soon I sat back in my chair and knew by the first few sentences that I was to receive no electric shock. He talked about books, the friendship of books, the comradeship of good books. I have forgotten, of course, almost everything that he said, but I shall never forget the impression that he made upon me. The sunlight that radiated from him shone into the dark corners of my mind, found a seed there and set it to germinating. Books, why I had been bombarded and battered with books all my life. Books were the things out of

which teachers gave lessons over which a fellow must grind whether he wanted to or not. Books were the objects that one had to tie up with a strap and carry away for the home lessons. I knew some books as enemies and hated them cordially; I knew others as handy tools with which one might construct necessary information. But here was a man talking about the friendship of books as if they were living things. He told us about some of the books he read as a lad after work hours by the light of his father's forge, and he named some that had been his inspiration and consolation through the trying hours of his life. I was amazed to discover that this blacksmith who had never been to school except for a few months, had something which I, who had been associating with books all my life and had done little but gone to school, had missed. So I went away with a new sentiment toward books. I turned to my own little collection, took them down one by one and began to realize how much they really meant to me, and how empty my life would be without them. From that time I began to cultivate the friendship of certain books and they have been my companions and my consolation ever since.

Let this illustrate what this man has been doing all his life and the way in which he has done it. In his thought he was no doubt a radical; that is, he went to the root of things. But when he had reached the root he did not root it up. He watered it and it began to bud and blossom. "When I go to hear others preach, I am apt to fall in love with the preacher; but when I go to hear John Knox preach, I fall out of love with myself." But the man who went to hear Robert Collyer preach did not fall out of love with himself,

or the preacher, or the world, or its God. He went away feeling that it is a good world presided over by a good God, full of kind and neighborly people and that he himself was one of them; if he had not done as well as he ought, if he had done the things he ought not to have done and left undone the things he ought to have done, there was yet health in him and if the good Father would give him time and opportunity he would prove himself worthy of his sonship. Did the preacher tell "How Enoch walked with God"? The hearer became sorry that he had neglected so great salvation and determined that he too would seek henceforth the friendship of the Great Companion. Did the preacher "Talk with Mothers"? Every woman in the sound of his voice began to look and act like a Madonna. Was his object "The Psalm of an Autumn Leaf"? or "The Treasures of the Snow"? These commonplace objects became transformed and glorified by the illumination of his magic words. The very subjects upon which he chose to speak reveal the great and tender heart of the man. "Our Debt to the Children," "Fathers and Sons," "The Joy of Harvest," "The Morning Song of Creation," "The Overplus of Blossom." What a man was this! His whole message was one of beauty and song and joy and service. Robert Collyer was a great man because he had a great heart. His whole message to humanity is compassed in one sentence, "The greatest of these is love." Love rang true in his words, shone in his face, mellowed his voice and exhaled from his personality. And because this word Love is bigger than all sects and greater than all creeds, we who were not of his especial fellowship still claim him for our own. He belongs to us all

by virtue of the love he bore us and the sacred affection and reverence in which we all held him. The whole world is a better place because he has lived in it and the heaven to which he has gone has become surpassingly attractive because he has entered through the gate into the city.

VIOLIN SOLO — HANDEL'S "LARGO"

BY LUDWIG MARUM

ADDRESS *

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

I AM very much afraid that I shall not be able to say what I want to say this morning, but I know that even though I fail completely I can trust you to understand and to forgive me. During a good part of yesterday I sat alone, through long, long hours, trying to write out my thoughts in some clear and definite form, so that I should be sure to say just the right thing; but when the day had gone, I found that the sheet of paper, which I had placed before me on my desk, was still a blank — it contained not a single word. And so I must do the best I can without manuscript or notes.

I came to this city five and a half years ago, and then met Robert Collyer for the first time in my life. I shall never forget how, after I had been called to this pulpit, he took me in his great arms, wished me God-speed on the road on which I had perhaps all too rashly set my feet, and pledged to me his constant and loyal support so long as he should live and share with

* Recorded stenographically during delivery, unknown to Mr. Holmes, and later revised by him.

me the ministry of this church. Five years and more have passed away since that moment, and here and now, in the sight of God and of this great company of his devoted friends, I desire to bear loving testimony to the fact that through all this time he faithfully kept that promise. Never did he pass one word of criticism upon what I believe must have often sorely tried him. Never once did he falter in his affection and support, although I fear that he must have been tempted many times. It has been my highest joy during all these years to see the smile upon his lips, when I did or said a thing which pleased him; and many times have I wept bitter tears at the thought that, through some mistake of word or action, I might have disappointed and pained him. Never once, however, did I see the look of reproach in his eyes, nor catch a word of reproof from his lips. It is not the easiest thing in the world for a man past his eightieth year to see his place usurped by one who is scarcely more than a youngster! But Dr. Collyer did not seem to find it hard. During all this time it was ever his will that my will should be his. He never gave advice save when it was sought, never made a suggestion unless it was asked for, and as I have good reason to know, never tolerated the slightest word of criticism of his colleague. So, through his great good will and abounding kindness, was my task made easy. The most sacred memory of my life will ever be these five or six years in which I have been intimately associated with this man as minister of the Church of the Messiah. I have grown to love him as I have loved no other man in all my experience. As I stand before you now and think of these years passed in closest association with him in his radiantly beautiful old age,

I know that you will not wonder that I cannot find words to say what I want to say.

My relations with Robert Collyer have been different from those of any other living person. My acquaintance was limited to five years, and these the last years of his life. Such years are not always the pleasantest years. Not always does the spirit remain sweet, and with increasing age grow sweeter. When Dr. Collyer's strength began to break, however, his spirit seemed to grow younger and gentler than ever, so that with him his old age was, perhaps, the best period of his entire life. His was the most wonderful old age, it seems to me, that can possibly be conceived — blest with perfect serenity, unending patience, and a fatherly love for every human soul. Even in his last hours of weakness and discomfort, there was no word or sign of complaint. I think of a day, some time ago, when I stood upon the seashore as the sun was sinking into the west. The ocean was as quiet as though it were made of glass; you could scarcely hear even the lapping of the waves upon the sand. Above my head some birds were winging their flight homeward to their nests for the night's repose. The only sound was a distant call now and then — and I actually stood still that even the sound of my footfall upon the beach might not disturb the sacred silence of the scene. In the west the sun was disappearing beneath the horizon, and all the heavens were flooded with the glory of its fading light.— So was it with Dr. Collyer as he went to his rest. His last hours, like his many years, were full of beauty, quiet, and infinite peace.

There was something wonderfully romantic about Dr. Collyer's life, especially to one like myself who

never saw him save when his active career was finished. The blacksmith, the missionary in Chicago, the agent of the Sanitary Commission, the great preacher — all these are to me like figures in a legend, or characters of history. I never heard the voice that wooed the ears of multitudes — I never saw the unbent giant form which was the admiration of men — I never felt that marvelous personal magnetism that won the hearts of his contemporaries. All this, to me, is "as a tale that is told." And yet, strangely enough, I never felt it necessary to inquire how these things could be, as we so often do when old age has broken the power of a life. Just to look upon this man's wonderful face, just to see his smile, just to behold the quiet beauty of his closing years, was to see the whole story of his romantic career fully explained. The secret of his power, it seems to me, can all be summed up in three very simple statements.

First, Robert Collyer had all the simplicity of a little child. He was perfectly natural, spontaneous, normal. He was never spoiled by the artificialities of life or captivated by the frills and fancies of the world in which he lived. He was oblivious to all that was unreal. Nothing could be more delightful than the perfectly frank delight with which he received the many honors which were showered upon him. Nothing could be more charming than the unconventional way he had of doing things. You will remember with what naïve unconsciousness he would always stumble over that formidable word "Emeritus," which in recent years had been added to his title of "Pastor." His religion was never anything else but the religion of a child. His spiritual beliefs were as simple and un-

questioning and genuine as those received by a child at its mother's knee. God the Father was as real to him as the stars upon which he looked at night. Immortality was to him as certain a thing as the coming of to-morrow morning. Nothing could be more sublime than his unfailing trust in the goodness of the world. Never did he reason about these fundamental verities. He did not know what speculation was. I sometimes think that I never troubled him so much as when I stood here in his pulpit and actually argued about God and the future life. "Except ye become as a little child," said Jesus, "ye can in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." This is all the assurance that we need as to the destiny of this great soul.

In the second place, Dr. Collyer had not merely the simplicity of a child, but also the tenderness of a woman. This great hand, which could weld the heated iron on the anvil, could touch the fevered brow of illness with infinite gentleness and quiet. He could enter the home of death, and his very presence would bring comfort and strength to stricken hearts. What sympathy was in his word and what tenderness in his smile! It is not surprising that he went to the front during the Civil War as an army nurse, and served through many weary weeks in the hospital and on the battle field as a very angel of mercy. For all the pains of men he had an infinite pity, and the magnetism of his presence was as a soothing balm to all who suffered. Seldom, in any man, do we find such tenderness as there was in Dr. Collyer's soul.

And lastly, he had all the power and virility of a man. I believe that we shall not truly understand him unless we see how mighty was his strength and how

magnificent his courage. It was a strong man who stood patiently day after day at the anvil — a strong man, who left the mother-land behind him and came to this new world where there was no friend to greet and help him — a strong man, who left the mother-church and went out alone into the world of a new spiritual experience not knowing whither he went — a strong man, who, after the terrible fire had swept over the city of Chicago, stood on the following Sunday morning on the ashes of his ruined church, undaunted and undismayed, and exhorted the people to trust in God and hope still in the mercy of his providence. Dr. Collyer was "a man" in every fiber of his being — a giant in spirit as well as in physical stature. There could be no greater mistake than to imagine that, in his childlike simplicity and womanly tenderness, there was lost any of the strength of manhood.

These three, it seems to me, are the ingredients that went into the making of Robert Collyer — the simplicity of a child, the tenderness of a woman, and the strength of a man. But why should we seek to analyze him? Can we not sum it all up in the simple statement that he was supremely human — so human, that all phases of character seemed to be incarnate in his single soul? It was this great fact which so impressed Dr. Collyer's dear friend, John White Chadwick, and inspired him to say in his poem dedicated to Robert Collyer:

> "You are so human; here's the central fact
> Of which your life and speech are all compact;
> All things that touch the simple common heart —
> These have you chosen — these, the better part!
> You are so human; feeling, thought and act."

And now he is dead! No, I have no right to use this word, for Robert Collyer did not believe in death. Let us rather say that he has gone. We are doing him the poorest service, I take it, when we weep over him and lament his passing. How can we complain at such an hour as this? — Only a few days ago, when I chanced to be late coming home, my little boy ran to me and said: "Father, I want to go to bed." All day long he had been busy at his games and his little tasks, and now he was tired and ready for sleep. So we put him to bed; and, laying his head upon the pillow, he gave that great sigh of comfort which is so characteristic of a child when the bed is welcome, and was instantly fast asleep, with that wonderful smile playing over his lips which tells that the little chap is dreaming of the joy of the new day that is to come with the morrow. So it was with Robert Collyer. His tasks were all done long since, and many times before he was stricken he confessed that he wanted to go to sleep. It did not surprise those of us who watched by his bedside during the long hours of that last day, to see a wonderful smile dawn upon his face as life vanished, a witness that he had met the perfect joy of the great new day beyond. So I believe that we should lay him in his grave trustingly, tenderly, cheerfully, without one word of complaint, knowing that he has truly passed from life to life and is still journeying on, a radiant spirit there as here.

PRAYER

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, thou art our guide and stay in the hour of death even as in the years of life. Therefore do we turn to thee, at this solemn and sacred moment, to seek from thee the help and strength without which we are as nothing.

We bless thee, O God, for thy manifold benefits — for the loving-kindness which thou hast bestowed upon the world — for the salvation which thou hast given unto our souls through the saints and apostles of thy spirit who have lived and died in all ages to the glory of thy holy name. We bless thee that thou hast ever spoken unto men through the lives of thy servants which have been since the world began; and especially that thou hast spoken unto us in our time through the life of this man, who has passed from our presence into thine; and that thou wilt ever speak unto us through the lovely memories that abide within our hearts. We thank thee that we have known this man as a teacher and a friend. We thank thee that it has been our privilege to hear him tell of thy Truth and Love, and to listen to his voice as it has been lifted unto thee in praise and prayer. We thank thee that, in his smile, we have seen thy goodness — in his tears, thy tender mercies — and in the sweetness and light of his great soul, the beauty of thy holiness. We thank thee that he hast blessed us with his presence, taught us by his wisdom, strengthened us by his faith, consoled us by his pity. Yea, we thank thee that we have known him, and so long as we shall live can cherish within our hearts, for

the quickening of our fainting spirits, the memory of his days.

We pray thee, our Father, that thy presence may be manifest to those who are mourning at this hour the loss of their beloved. Comfort them, we beseech thee, with the comfort wherewith he comforted all those whom he found stricken and forlorn. And unto all of us, our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant the sweet consolations of thy blessing, that we may know that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, can ever separate us from thy perfect love.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever,

Amen.

HYMN

It singeth low in every heart,
We hear it each and all,—
A song of those who answer not,
However we may call.
They throng the silence of the breast;
We see them as of yore,—
The kind, the true, the brave, the sweet,
Who walk with us no more.

'Tis hard to take the burden up,
When these have laid it down:

They brightened all the joy of life,
  They softened every frown.
But, oh! 'tis good to think of them
  When we are troubled sore;
Thanks be to God that such have been,
  Although they are no more!

More homelike seems the vast unknown,
  Since they have entered there;
To follow them were not so hard,
  Wherever they may fare.
They cannot be where God is not,
  On any sea or shore;
Whate'er betides, thy love abides,
  Our God for evermore!

BENEDICTION

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

And now may the Lord bless us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and give us joy, and peace, and love — this day and forever more. Amen!

THE MEMORIAL SERMON

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

Delivered at the Memorial Service at the Church of the Messiah, New York, on December 8, 1912.

ROBERT COLLYER, SAINT AND SEER

(He) walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.—Gen. v. 24.

We are gathered here this morning — and it does my heart good, as I know it would have done Dr. Collyer's heart good, to see so many of us — to offer up our tribute of reverence and love for that great and good man, who for more than thirty-three years of sunshine and of shadow, was the loyal and devoted minister of this church. It is altogether fitting, as it so happens, that we should hold such a memorial service as this on this particular day; for it was just exactly eighty-nine years ago to-day * that Robert Collyer was born, far across the seas, in the little town of Keighley, in England.

His family was not very much to boast of, in a worldly sense, on either side of the house. The early twenties, we must remember, were the days when power-machinery was for the first time being developed on a wide scale, and factories were being built on every

* This sermon was preached on the morning of Dr. Collyer's eighty-ninth birthday, Dec. 8, 1912.

available site throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. This resulted in a great and immediate demand for men and women, and especially children, to run the wonderful new machines in the mills; and nowhere, in Yorkshire or anywhere else, did the local supply of help begin to satisfy the needs of the situation. Therefore the owners of the factories by permission of the government, went scouring through the orphan asylums of England for boys and girls, and these they were allowed to take and keep as apprentices — the boys until they were twenty-one years of age and the girls until they were eighteen — on condition that they provide them with food and shelter, instruct them in the three R's, and teach the boys a trade, by which they could support themselves when they were released. Dr. Collyer's father was an orphan lad who was snatched in this way out of an asylum in the south of England, and set to work in a factory in the town of Fewston; and his mother was an orphan girl from Norwich, who was brought north in the same year and set to work in the same factory. Here they grew up side by side, and "it came to pass in due time that they fell in love with each other." At last, on a bitter winter's day in January, 1823, when the snow lay so heavy upon the ground that they had to walk a part of the way on the top of the stone walls, the lad and the lassie trudged two miles out into the country and were married by the good minister of the parish church. In the case neither of his father nor his mother was Dr. Collyer able to trace his family line beyond the grandfather, and so, as he put it in his charming autobiography, "we have no family tree to speak of, only this low bush."

Yet it was with a right good-will, and with great seriousness, too, that Dr. Collyer declared, in an address delivered not so long ago in England, that he "was well born." He was right; for the quality of a man's birth, thank God! does not depend upon the wealth or the social standing of his forebears, but upon the blood which flows in their veins and the souls which are resident in their mortal flesh. Dr. Collyer's father was an active, able, God-fearing man — a blacksmith by trade, of whom it was said through all the countryside that, if there was anything to be done with iron, he was the man to do it. He had very little education, and therefore stumbled over the big words in the Bible and the Psalm-book; but he was a teacher in the Sunday-school all the same, and just the man to stand up and lead the hymns. He was gentle, too, with his children, and this in a day when roughness and even brutality were common enough. "He never thrashed me but once," said Dr. Collyer, in after years, "and that was for striking my sister; and then he cried and begged my pardon."

His mother, as seems to be the case with all great men, was a wonderful woman. "My mother," said Dr. Collyer, "was a woman of such a faculty, though she could hardly read or write, that I believe, if she had been ordered to take charge of a 70-gun ship and carry it through a battle, she would have done it. She had in her, also, wells of poesy, and laughter so shaking that the tears would stream down her face — and deep abiding tenderness like that of the saints." This testimony was impressively confirmed in later years by Dr. Collyer's dear friend and colleague, Henry W. Bellows, for many years minister of All Souls' Church

in this city, who, after a return from a visit to England, met Dr. Collyer on the street, and, stopping him, said abruptly: "Ah, Robert, now I know where you get your outfit. I saw your mother in Leeds."

"Well born" he most certainly was, and, he might have added, well reared also! The home was poor enough, to be sure,— the father earned only $4.50 per week, even when business was at its best,— but it was clean and cozy, and illumined by the light and warmed by the unfailing hearth-fires of human love. The house itself was a two-room cottage, with a low attic or loft overhead, and "the windows looking right into the sun's eye over the valley and westward to the moors." In front of the building was a stretch of greensward, with a great rose-bush in the center, which was bearing a wealth of blossoms only a few summers ago, and "a plum-tree that gave me a good deal of trouble in those days," says the Doctor, in his "Memories," "because the fruit in the summer never began to make good the promise of the blossom in the spring."

Here the boy raced and romped as a little lad over the wide-stretching moors; ate his simple fare of skimmed milk, oat-cake, potatoes and salt, with a sip of cambric tea on the Sunday; and had his sleep in the loft overhead amid the silences of the long, long winter nights. Here, in these very early years in the home, he received all the education he ever had,— a few months at a dame's school in the town, a few months more at a master's school a half mile away, and then a little while with a Master Hardie two miles over the moor, who, Dr. Collyer testifies, "was a good teacher." This was all the education that he ever

obtained, excepting a winter or two of night school later on; but it was enough to open his heart to that love of books which remained, throughout all his many years, a perpetual source of inspiration and delight. Dr. Collyer was a lover of books, if ever there was one; and it was out of the books of all kinds and descriptions which he devoured in his youth that he obtained all the preparation he ever had for the notable ministry which for more than fifty years was the admiration and wonder of men. There is a delightful story, which Dr. Collyer always loved to tell, which illustrates perfectly his early predilection for reading. One happy day, " some good soul " had given the little boy " a big George the Third penny," and he must needs go and spend it forthwith for a stick of candy at the store. There the sticks were, in a beautiful glass jar in the window; but right close to the jar, as he now discovered, was a tiny book, with the fascinating inscription, " The History of Whittington and his Cat, William Walker, Printer. Price, One Penny." Instantly the choice was made, and it was not the candy for which the big penny was exchanged! " I gave up the candy," he tells us, " and bought the book, . . . and in that purchase lay the spark of a fire which has not yet gone down to white ashes,— the passion, which grew with my growth, to read all the books in my early years I could lay my hands on." In the home there was a shelf of books,— not a " five-foot shelf," unfortunately, but it carried such precious volumes as " Pilgrim's Progress," " Robinson Crusoe," Goldsmith's " England," and a great Bible illustrated with splendid pictures. Then the father was an observing man, who appreciated his son's love of reading,

and every now and then managed to borrow a volume or two for the boy; and memorable were the days when in this way the poems of Burns and the dramas of Shakespeare first came into his hands. Later on, when the lad had become a worker at the forge, he met dear John Dobson, whose name never came from his lips in later years without being caressed with lingering affection. This man earned a good wage, and, being a bachelor, had no family cares, and for many years he made it his pride and joy to buy books, not for himself, but for the eager young man who must ever have a printed page before his eyes. And so he read,— read by the fading sunlight on the moors; read, as Abraham Lincoln used to read, by the light of the hearth-fire in the winter nights; read as he walked to his work in the early morning and again as he trudged homewards in the late evening; read as he blew his bellows in the smithy; read, as he tells us, even when he went a-courting. "And if my sweetheart had not been the best lassie in all the world for me, as well as the bonniest, she would have given me the mitten, and served me right."

At eight years of age there came the one sad and painful period of his life, and it lasted for no less than six years, or until he was fourteen years of age. This was the time when, owing to his father's small earnings and the increasing family, he was obliged to go into the mills and work for his living. He has left us a pitiful picture of this experience as a child-laborer. The hours were from six o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening,— on Saturday, from six to six,— with an hour off each day at noon for dinner. Still worse, the little children were never allowed to

sit down at their work, and, if they were caught by the overseer resting themselves for a moment on some stray box or barrel, they were speedily brought to their feet by the stinging lash of a heavy leathern strap across their shoulders. "The result of this was that the weaker children were so crippled that the memory of their crooked limbs still casts a sinister light for me on the Scripture, 'The Lord regardeth not the legs of a man.' I was tired beyond all telling," he continues, "and thought the bell would never ring to let us out and home at last and to bed. And it seemed as if I had only just got to sleep when it rang again to call me to work." One day, when I chanced to ask him if he would like to live his life all over again, he instantly replied, with great good cheer, that he would. Then his face darkened for a moment, and he said: "But not the years in the mill. I wouldn't live those over again, not for all the blessings that might be given me in compensation."

At fourteen years of age he was rescued from this slavery by the necessity of learning a trade. "There was one article in our home creed that would admit of no doubt or denial: the boys must learn some craft better than those we were taught in the factory. If I stayed on in the factory, this would be a step down from the rank my father had attained as a smith." And so there came the glad day when he was apprenticed to a blacksmith in the town of Ilkley, ten miles across the moors,— the very man, as it chanced, who had taught his father the trade many years before. Here he remained during the next twelve years of his life, "sitting by the anvil, and considering the unwrought iron,"— this being "the utmost limit then

and for many years after," he tells us, "of [his] ambition." He declares that he was never much of a worker,— certainly no such skilled artisan as his father, — for his heart was far more in his books than in his hammer. But he must have been something more than an ordinary blacksmith; for, when his master died, he himself became the master of the forge, and was soon earning the munificent sum of a pound a week. This was enough to maintain a home and to keep the fire burning on the hearth. So did the day come thus early when he claimed the lassie who had won his loyal heart for her own, and, all youthful as he was, made her his wife.

Then came the first great sorrow of Dr. Collyer's life, for a year and a half had scarcely gone when the dear wife was laid tenderly away in the graveyard upon the hill, with her babe upon her breast; and the young husband and father found himself alone and desolate in an empty home. For the first time in his experience the beauty seemed to go out of the world and the joy of living to vanish from his heart. For the first time his hammer rang dull and lifeless on the anvil. For the first time his beloved books failed to hold his mind and stir the deep places of his soul. For the first time his friends were shut out of his life, and even his "good helper," John Dobson, not permitted to know the secrets of his heart. "I did not consult with flesh and blood," he writes, in his autobiography. "The secret lay between God and my own soul, and in God I must find help."

It was this experience which first turned his mature thoughts seriously toward religion. He found himself thinking, in his loneliness and sorrow, of the Sunday-

school on the hill where he had gone as a lad, of the hymns that his father had sung, and of the Bible on the bookshelf at home. One day, almost by chance, he went to a meeting of Methodists, his " neighbors and friends," in a little chapel on the outskirts of the town, and there was moved to tell them " in not many words how it was with [him]." Before long, under the stress of his emotion, he had undergone the great experience of conversion, and become a full-fledged member of the Methodist Church.

With this there came the one great and epoch-making discovery of his life; namely, that he was one who was dowered with the divine gift of speech. Going, night after night, to the prayer-meetings of the Methodists, he became accustomed to standing upon his feet and bearing witness to his experience of religion. Little by little he discovered that his good neighbors heard him gladly, and were deeply moved by the fervent words which came pouring forth out of his full heart. Nor was he the only one that made this discovery. For the people themselves were soon aware that they were listening to a prophet, and nothing would satisfy them but that he must be a lay-preacher, and go out " on the Sunday " to the near-by villages and talk to the good friends there as he talked to the neighbors at home. Every Sunday, therefore, when the fires were banked in the forge and the leather apron laid aside, the stalwart young blacksmith went trudging away across the moors or over the hills, to meet some little group of Methodists and speak to them of the deep things of the spirit. Sometimes he talked in little chapels; more often in kitchens or tap-rooms or workshops; once in a while, like the great John Wesley himself, out under

the open skies, by some cross roads or in some harvest field. Then on the Monday the fires were blazing again in the smithy, and the hammer was ringing with a right good-will upon the anvil. Gradually, under the influences of these new experiences, the young man found beauty creeping back into the world, and peace and joy taking their wonted places in his heart. His work began to absorb him as before. His books were once again the solace and inspiration of every moment that he could call his own. His friends were all gathered again into his embrace, and beloved John Dobson was received once more into the sacred and secret places of his soul. Sorrow had endured for a night, but joy had come with the morning!

Great as was the change, however, still further change began to seem more and more inevitable. In spite of everything that could be said or done, it still remained true that the cruel tragedy of his loss had interrupted the steady-flowing current of his life, and in 1849 he made up his mind to emigrate to America. Up to this time he had not been forty miles away from home, but the thought of the new world across the seas was not wholly strange to his mind. His father and mother, at the time of their marriage, had fully intended to start life anew in the United States. "But the panic of 1823-24 had struck England like a bolt from the blue and slain their hope" for the time being. Then the little lads and lassies began to come one by one into the home, and the longed-for flight was deferred from year to year, and at last surrendered altogether; but many a time had Robert heard his parents, as they sat by the fireside on the long winter evenings, talk of America and "of their dead and dying hope"

of going there, and many times, therefore, had his imagination been fired by glowing visions of this great and distant land. Furthermore, "one of his father's shipmates had gone there, and was doing well." So what more natural, when the thought of beginning life all over again at last took full possession of his mind, than that his hopes and fears should betake themselves to America, and beckon him to cross the seas! Whatever his final impulses in the matter, there came at last a fair day in mid-April, 1850, when he married the noble woman who was his wife and helpmeet "through more than forty years," and on the next day the two set sail from Liverpool, in the steerage of the old steamship *Roscius,* for New York, where they "landed in four weeks to the day."

It gives me a touch of sadness to think of these two young people, the lad and the lassie, as Dr. Collyer himself would put it, as they walked up Broadway toward the City Hall, hand in hand together,— the Yorkshire blacksmith, with his great frame roughly clad, I must believe, in his rude workingman's garb, stumbling, no doubt, under a heavy burden of luggage, and by his side, the little wife, ill, half-frightened, and unspeakably lonely. There was no friend to give them greeting; no familiar spot to which they could turn for refuge; no opening, so far as they could see, for employment and the establishment of the new home. New York, in that far-away time, was of course very different from the great metropolis it is to-day; but it must have seemed, to these two travelers, a very big, very busy, and very empty place. If it had not been for the great-hearted Yorkshire tavern-keeper whom they chanced to meet upon their landing, I dare not

think of what misery would have been in their souls, as they looked about them.

Small space was there for sight-seeing, however. "I must lose no time finding work, for our funds were low," is the Doctor's business-like comment at this point in his "Memories." They departed at once, therefore, for their destination in Philadelphia, and, fortunately, the young blacksmith found immediate employment at a forge in Shoemakertown, seven miles out into the country. Here he remained for almost nine years, at the work of making claw-hammers. This, as he tells us, "was a new craft. I had never made a claw-hammer until then in my life." But he was a skilled workman, and before long there came a time, as he loved to tell in his later years, when he could turn out no less than twelve dozen claw-hammers in a single day. He soon "caught the fine contagion" of his work, as he describes it, and prospered at his trade. Now and then, however, he fell on hard times, and the struggle for existence became a bitter one. Thus, in the July following his arrival in the country, the forge at which he worked was shut down for repairs. Work must be had at any cost, and for a few weeks he tossed hay in the meadows. Then, when the crop was gathered, he sought out his employer and asked for a job on the new work being done at the forge. There was no opening but that of carrying a hod for the bricklayers; but this was eagerly accepted, and for "a full week" Dr. Collyer shouldered his hod and carried faithfully his loads of brick and mortar. Then in October, 1857, came the great panic, and again the fires went out and the anvils were silent. Work was more urgent than before, for the home now had its little ones

to care for, and the brave young father went forth to accept any kind of labor to which he could put his hand. For a while he dug a well for a good neighbor. Then he worked upon the turnpike. " A gentleman many years after told me that he saw me breaking stone, but this I do not remember." At any rate, " we did what we could, the mother and I," as the " Memories " tells us; and somehow or other the little home was kept together and the lads and lassies fed and clothed, until, " when the time of the birds had come and the grapes gave a goodly smell, the fires were lighted again and the hammers rang on the anvils."

More interesting from our standpoint this morning, however, is the story of the religious experiences of these years, from 1850 to 1859. Almost as soon as Dr. Collyer arrived in this country he presented his letters of transfer to the nearest Methodist church in Philadelphia, and was received with open arms by all the brethren. At the very first service which he attended he was asked, in good Methodist fashion, to " make a prayer." Then followed what he afterwards described as " the scare of a lifetime "; for he was informed, to his utter dismay, that no one of his auditors had understood " the half of what he said," because of the broad Yorkshire dialect in which he spoke. Here was " a panic," indeed, for he had set his heart upon being a lay-preacher in America as he had been in England. But the fright was over, almost as suddenly as it had come; for the eager young man soon conquered " the new tongue in some measure," and, what is more, the people after a time did not seem to mind whether they comprehended everything he said or not. The reason for this latter fact was made plain in after

years, when an old neighbor said to him: "I didn't understand you for a long time when you came to preach for us, but I felt good. So I always came to hear you."

Thus did he become a preacher here, as he had been once in the old country; and every Sunday he was off bright and early to some little hamlet on the circuit in which he lived. Week after week he trudged over the dusty roads, with his Bible under his arm and the word of God in his heart,— preached his sermon to the little group of farmers, tradesmen, and artisans which awaited him and then trudged home again in the late evening to his well-earned rest. He was not paid even so much as to pay for the wear and tear on his shoe leather, but rewards were many, all the same. Everywhere he found good friends; now and then he picked up a book or discovered a library; and, best of all, he had the inestimable privilege of pouring out his heart on all the deep things of the spirit. These were sunny days with him, and he would gladly have had them continue indefinitely, but, almost before he knew it, the clouds began to gather above him and the first intimations of the gathering storm to be manifest.

The troubles of this young preacher-blacksmith from Yorkshire had their origin in the fact that he was unable, or unwilling, to preach the doctrines of the church. "I never cared for what we call dogma," he tells us in his "Memories." "I preached much more about the life that now is, because this was what always lay near my heart." Now preaching on moral and spiritual truths, as distinct from doctrines of belief, was as unusual and as heretical in the orthodox circles of those days as preaching on political and industrial truths is

to-day. What the good Methodist brethren wanted was dogma, the more the better; and this was just the very thing for which this great-hearted and broad-minded preacher cared nothing whatsoever. Hence the people grew restless and discontented; and by and by it began to be whispered about that the Yorkshireman "didn't believe any more in the doctrines so precious and essential." Nor was this wholly untrue, "but not," as he makes haste to remind us, "by flat denial in the pulpit."

Then his troubles were still further aggravated by the fact that he became an Abolitionist. On one ever-memorable day Lucretia Mott had come to the town, and spoken on the subject of slavery, "as one who was moved by the Holy Ghost." Instantly the young blacksmith, deeply moved and permanently persuaded by the glowing eloquence of the valiant Quakeress, sought her out, and their interview that night was the beginning of a life-long and infinitely beautiful friendship between the two. From that time on Dr. Collyer was an ardent Abolitionist, "to the wonder of the kindly fellowship of the saints in the churches." They were profoundly disturbed at his association with these despised and hated fanatics, and many were the complaints which began to be spoken against him in all quarters of the circuit.

It was directly because of his association with these reformers that disaster finally came upon him. Through Lucretia Mott he had been introduced to Dr. Furness of Philadelphia, the minister of the First Unitarian Church and a leader of the Abolitionist group. This great man had no sooner looked upon Robert Collyer than he loved him, and instantly a friendship

was joined which lasted through more than half a century. Many months had not passed when, in all innocence, Dr. Furness invited his Methodist comrade to preach for him in his absence, and Dr. Collyer, in equal innocence, accepted. Instantly that storm which had been so long brewing broke in violence upon his head. "This was the last proof of [his] decline and fall from grace." Without a moment's delay, he was summoned to appear for trial before the presiding elder of his district, was asked certain pointed questions which he could not answer, and then, seeing the significance of the situation, voluntarily presented his resignation as a local preacher, which "the good man," as Dr. Collyer called him, found it necessary to accept. He was not deprived of his membership in the church. "I still hold this," he was wont to say proudly in later years. But his life as a Methodist was over, and he went out of the conference, "not knowing whither he was going."

The end had come suddenly, and yet it was not unexpected, nor was it, on the whole, unwelcome. He had long felt that he was out of sympathy with his brethren, and on one fateful night, in particular, it had been impressed upon him that he must say "farewell" sooner or later. This was on the occasion of a great revival in the little town, when he had heard an earnest young preacher close his sermon with the words: "If you could hold your hand in the flame of this lamp but a few moments, can you imagine the agony of such a burning? But this is no more than a faint and poor intimation of the eternal burning in the fires of hell which awaits you if you do not repent,— the burning not for a few moments, but forevermore,— and some

sinner now in this church may be there before to-morrow morning." "The sermon turned me sick at heart," he records in his autobiography. "I wanted to rise, and say, 'That is not true, not one word of it.'" Yet the old minister in the pulpit was uttering a loud amen, and all the brethren seemed pleased with the discourse. To remain longer in the church was impossible, and therefore did his dismissal come in many ways as a glad relief. "I seemed to draw a long breath when all was over," he tells us, and yet it was a moment of bitter pain and disappointment. Of all the men and women with whom he had been so long associated, and every one of whom he had loved so dearly, not one held out his hand to the departing heretic or said a word. "Intimate as we had been in the church and in our homes through all these years," he says, "I went out alone and lonesome."

It was a painful experience, and more painful still was the gloomy prospect of the future. Where was he going, and what was he to do? It seemed impossible to remain in Shoemakertown. Furthermore, as he now began to confess frankly to himself, perhaps for the first time, his heart was not in his work at the anvil, but in his preaching in the pulpit. He was more a preacher than a blacksmith, skilled artisan though he was, and he knew it! Yet what pulpits were now open to him? Where were the people who would listen to his words and accept his teaching?

The prospect was certainly dark enough, when suddenly, as though by a very interposition of Divine Providence, the way was opened. The Unitarian church in Chicago, which supported a mission, wanted a minister-at-large for the poor. News of the need came to Dr.

Furness in Philadelphia, and he recommended the young Methodist blacksmith, whom he knew and loved so well. Soon the call came, was passed on to Dr. Collyer, and instantly accepted; and, before many weeks had come and gone, the preacher and his family were far on their way to Chicago, a city as strange to them as Pekin itself.

Now, with his arrival in Chicago, in January, 1859, begins the great and famous period of Dr. Collyer's career. The details of these years are so familiar, and on the whole so uneventful, that I have no need of narrating them at length at this time. From the very start his course was one continuous progress, one mighty triumph, with ease, fame, influence, friendship, love, to make his days one round of happiness. Now and again there came sad and tragic interruptions, as, for instance, the Civil War, when he went to the front as an army nurse and agent of the Sanitary Commission; or the great fire, which destroyed his church and home, ruined his parishioners and scattered them far and wide; or the death of his beloved daughter in New York, which threatened for a time to break his spirit. But always the great soul rose to its task, and the great life went on. Asked by a friend at a banquet table, in the late sixties, how old he was, he replied, with that sweet and gentle humor which was always so characteristic of him: "I am on the sunny side of forty. It is proving sunnier for me on this side than on the other."

So great was his success in the mission for the poor, not only as a pastor, but also as a preacher, that it was not surprising, when the people of the new Unitarian church on the North Side found themselves ready to settle a minister, that they did not call any one of the

well-known clergymen of Boston and vicinity,— the traditional source of supply in that day as in our own,— but turned instinctively to this eloquent Yorkshireman and gave him the call. The proposal seemed impossible at first, and it was only by dint of much argument that he could be persuaded to accept. Finally, in fear and trembling of spirit, he gave his consent, and his long and famous ministry at Unity Church began! Year by year the fame of this " blacksmith preacher," as he now came to be known, spread ever wider abroad, and people from far and near flocked to hear his preaching. By 1870 he was the best-known preacher in the Middle West, and his fame had already spread throughout the East, outside as well as inside his own denomination. This made inevitable at this time his entrance upon the Lyceum platform; and for many years he addressed great multitudes in all parts of the country, as one of the most popular and highly acclaimed lecturers of the period. In 1879 he received the call to the ministry of the Church of the Messiah in New York, and, accepting, began a ministry in the first city of the country which rivaled in distinction and general influence his earlier ministry in Chicago. For sixteen years this pulpit was his throne; and through the power of his voice alone its name was made familiar in every quarter of the English-speaking world. Then in 1896 the burden of his years began to weigh upon him, and he relinquished the active labors of his pastorate to younger hands. From that day to the day when he was last stricken he lent to his successors the blessing of his devotion and support, and to his people the " sweetness and light " of his rarely beautiful old age. Sunday after Sunday he stood in this pulpit, leading hearts in

fervent prayer to God, and bestowing upon bowed heads his gentle benediction. Often he spoke his word of counsel and suggestion, and now and again preached the classic sermons of his earlier days. And always, whether speaking or silent, he was with us,— a radiant presence, perfect in physical beauty, moral grandeur, and spiritual peace.

Now what shall we say as to the significance of this great life? It must be admitted at the outset that from the worldly point of view it is not remarkable to any very exceptional degree. There are striking and impressive contrasts, as for example, between the sturdy blacksmith at the forge and the eloquent minister in the pulpit, between the immigrant landing alone and friendless at the Battery in New York and the pastor and preacher, beloved by thousands and known of tens of thousands, or between the untutored apprentice pouring over his books by night and the distinguished author and clergyman, standing in his scholar's robes at the University of Leeds, to receive the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. But in all this there is nothing really extraordinary. So far as the detail of action is concerned there is nothing in Dr. Collyer's career to compare with the achievement of Napoleon in marching from an exile's haunt in Corsica to the throne of half of Europe, or of Lincoln in climbing from the frontier cabin to the White House, or even of Andrew Carnegie, the friend of Dr. Collyer through many years, who landed on these shores a half-century ago the poorest of the poor, and stands to-day one of the richest men and most generous philanthropists that the world has ever seen. Dr. Collyer's career is com-

monplace in the extreme, when compared to the careers of such heroes of active achievement as these. But wherein, on the other hand, is any such comparison as this possible? In one of the most famous sermons which he ever preached James Martineau declared that all men must be classified under three distinct headings, which he named, respectively, "Having, Doing, and Being." If we adopt this principle of human classification, there can be no question as to where Robert Collyer must be placed. He never had very much and he never did very much, as compared with what has been had and done by certain great giants of the past and present; nor do I imagine that he ever cared very much either to have or do. Dr. Collyer is remarkable not for what he gained in terms of dollars and cents, and not for what he did in terms of mighty achievement, but simply and solely for what he was in terms of the spirit. Dr. Collyer was simply a man — and what a man! What more can be said of him? What more, in the sight either of God or of men, need be said of him? To be a man in all the fullness of physical, moral, and spiritual being, is not this enough for one life? And was not Robert Collyer all of this, as few men perhaps have ever been?

In considering his character it is not surprising perhaps that those of us who have known him only in his later years are inclined to think first of all of the tender and gentle aspects of his nature. It is his sweetness, as expressed in the wonderful smile, the warm hand-clasp, the loving word, that first comes to our minds. We shall do him wrong, however, I believe, if we declare this to be the central feature of his life. It is my conviction, born and matured out of five years of

intimate personal association, that we shall not really understand this great man until we come to see that his basic characteristic was strength more than sweetness, power more than patience, "toughness" more than "tenderness," to use the famous phrase of William James. Robert Collyer was fundamentally a strong man. In physique he was a veritable giant, and his outward frame did not belie the inward stature of his soul. It was a strong man who fronted the tragic sorrow of his early years, and stayed the havoc that it was making in his soul. It was a strong man who crossed the waters to these unknown shores, and, without so much as an acquaintance to lend him a hand, started life anew. It was a strong man who refused to sell his soul when the charges of heresy were leveled against him, and went out of his mother church, without so much as a friendly word from the brethren to bid him Godspeed. It was a strong man who left the anvil, and entered upon the task of a ministry for which he had received no teaching beyond his rude experience as a circuit-preacher. It was a strong man who stood upon the ashes of the "holy and beautiful house" which had been "burned with fire" in Chicago, and, with waste and terror all about him, conquered the despair of his own soul and led his assembled people in prayers of praise and love to God. It was a strong man who beheld the slow decay of his vital powers, his gradual retirement from the triumphs and honors of public life, and the assumption of his familiar tasks by other and younger hands, and felt no slightest trace of bitterness or envy. There was no weakness, no fear, no compromise, no surrender in this man. There was granite in him which could withstand the mightiest assaults of

chance and change. Even in small things he was as strong and valiant as ever. Witness, for example, the story of how he was one night conducting a prayer-meeting with Dwight L. Moody, at the front during the war, and, when he heard the great revivalist declare that they were going to the battle fields to save the souls of the soldiers who otherwise might die in their sins, he rose to his feet and said, " Brother Moody is mistaken: we are not going there to save the souls of our soldiers, but to save their lives, to heal their wounds and comfort their afflictions, and leave their souls in the hands of God." Only the other day I received a letter from Rev. Mr. Heizer of Ithaca, telling of an incident which took place a few years ago, when the Doctor was preaching at Cornell University. At the close of the service he started to give out the last hymn, and had read only a few lines, when he discovered that it was most unexpectedly orthodox in its theological tone. Stopping abruptly in his reading, he paused for a moment, and then said with almost startling emphasis, " You can sing this hymn if you want to, but I won't read it," and sat down without another word!

But strength of mind and soul, great as it was in his nature, was not all by any means. The " grace, mercy, and peace " which were supremely characteristic of his later years were always in him and always made up much of the wonderful charm of his personality. Here, if ever, it was true, as the Scripture has it, that " out of the strong came forth sweetness." It was this ineffable gentleness and tenderness of spirit, it seems to me, which won him such a host of friends and held them for him through life. I like to think of the brave lads and bonnie lassies who must have gathered around the

anvil of this stout-hearted blacksmith in the early days, just to watch the sparks fly from the hot iron, and hear the blithe ring of his voice as he passed the time of day. I like to think how the simple peasants and laborers and mill-hands of the Yorkshire hamlets assembled on the Sabbath to listen to the earnest words of the young man who preached God's truth just for the pure joy of it. I like to think how friends gathered about the lonely immigrant and his girl-wife, when first they landed on these shores. "We sought no friends," he tells us; and then adds, with such delightful simplicity, "They came to us of their own free will!" What could be more natural? When will the flower not turn to the sun or the bee to the blossom? It was the warmth and sweetness of this great soul that drew all men unto him. It was the simple tenderness of his big heart that won the loyal sympathies of all who saw and met him. Strong he was, and gentle, also! — the gentleness of the woman wedded in perfect union with the strength of the man! An ideal marriage, of which the fruits were those seen of the Apostle, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

But I believe that we must go deeper yet if we would reach the fullness of the stature of this great and good man. More and more, as I grew to know and love Robert Collyer, I came to think of him first of all as a Saint and secondly as a Seer. In speaking of him as a Saint, I do not refer to his personal virtues. No man ever had a purer soul, but it is not this fact in which I am interested just now. When I describe him as a Saint, I have in mind that conception of individual sanctity which is set forth so wonderfully in Saint John's

Gospel, where the Master is made to say, in his last discourse with his disciples, "I sanctify myself for others' sakes." This, strictly speaking, is the true meaning of sainthood; and it is from this point of view that I think of Robert Collyer as a saint. All through his life he was sanctifying himself "for others' sakes." Such joy as he got out of his work as a blacksmith he derived from the fact that it gave him an opportunity to be of service to his neighbors. But he was never really contented here, for the reason that the opportunity offered was comparatively small. Hence his early activity as a lay-preacher to the Methodist brethren. Hence, also, his exceeding great joy, when the door was opened into the regular ministry, and the field of service "for others' sakes" was indefinitely expanded. What a ministry of personal sanctification his has been; how patient, how tireless, how full of grace! How many there are to rise up and call him blessed, for the word that has been spoken in time of sorrow, for the smile that has brought light and hope to darkened eyes, and for the hand that has been lent to weakness and despair. A saint indeed! — a Saint of the Assisi type, in an age when such a type is rare!

Then I have come to think of Robert Collyer also as a Seer; and here I touch upon the secret places of his spiritual life. A Seer is one, if I mistake not, who can see the things which are "unseen and eternal." He believes in God not because such belief is rational, but because he himself has verily seen God face to face. He awaits the immortal life as he awaits the morrow, not because he has persuaded himself of its reality by processes of logic, but because his soul has actually gone into the invisible and beheld its wonders. He

trusts that men are good, not as a reasonable principle, but as a moral experience. It is in this sense that Robert Collyer was a Seer. He knew all spiritual verities by intuition. He accepted all eternal hopes, without doubt or question, as things transcending argument. So knowing and seeing, he walked among men, pointing them to the glad vision of God and their own souls. It is this fact which explains Dr. Collyer's strange and wonderful power over those who came into his presence. Men whom the world found cold and cruel he found only beautiful, and they were beautiful with him! Men who were bold and merciless in daily life became as gentle as little children beneath his transforming influence. This was supremely illustrated in a remarkable story which the Doctor told me once, and which, so far as I know, has never before been made public. Some years ago a woman spoke to him in this church, after the Sunday service, and asked for a brief interview. She began by saying, " You don't remember me, Dr. Collyer, but I remember you, and shall never forget you." Then she told her story, as follows: " Many years ago you married me in Chicago. At that time I was the keeper of a house of prostitution, and my husband had just finished a term in State's prison. When we came to you, we had never a thought of anything but continuing in the old life. But something in your smile — something in the way you spoke to us — a word in your prayer! What was it? I cannot say! But, when we left you, everything was changed. To-day, sir, my husband is a Congregational minister in Connecticut, and I am the mother of his three children!" It was miracles of this kind that

Jesus wrought. It is such miracles that the true seer can always perform.

Now that this great soul has gone, what shall we say as "the conclusion of the whole matter"?

In what is perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most famous, sermon that he ever wrote, Dr. Collyer took as his text, what I chose for my text this morning —"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." In the opening paragraph of this sermon he writes as follows: "The first part of my text is the most striking characterization of a good man's life to be found in our Bible; the last, the most touching record of a good man's end. It is said of other men, that they followed after God, or walked in the way of God; that this one died full of years, and that one satisfied; but it is reserved for this man alone to win and hold this great place — to walk with God as with a dear friend, voice answering to voice, hand touching hand, face reflecting face, from the beginning to the end of life; then, when the end comes, death is shorn of its terrors, casting no more shadow on Enoch's spirit than if it were the spirit of a yearling child,— the life that now is opening into that which is to come, as a clear twilight opens into day. I know you will agree with me that no life can be more beautiful, no end more desirable. The most primitive characterization of a good man's life, this is still as much as can be said of any man, more than any man I have ever known would like to say of his own life or predict of his death."

May we not say that unconsciously, in writing these lines, Dr. Collyer was writing of himself? Like Enoch

of old, he " walked with God as with a dear friend, voice answering to voice, hand touching hand, face reflecting face, from the beginning to the end of life." And like Enoch of old, also, he " died full of years "; and death cast " no more shadow on [his] spirit than if it were the spirit of a yearling child." " This is [indeed] as much as can be said of any man," but it is not too much to say of Robert Collyer, Saint and Seer.

ADDRESSES

Delivered at the Memorial Meeting of the Robert Collyer Men's Club at the Church of the Messiah, New York, on December 18, 1912.

BY J. BURNET NASH

Mr. President and fellow members and friends, I feel it a great privilege to have this opportunity of paying tribute to this great memory, but I do not see quite why I am asked to speak to-night. For I have not had the intimate companionship with Dr. Collyer that his fellow ministers have had, nor have I known him in the family circle as Dr. Knopf has. Perhaps it is as one of us all — as the man in the pew — that I am here. But before mentioning that, may I say that I did have one opportunity of knowing Dr. Collyer that was a little different. Several years ago — about ten as I recall it — I helped him in the Sunday school which was then entirely under his charge. How lovely he was with the children, big and little, and how I used to wonder why the school did not fill up. For the Sunday school was not inspiring, but Dr. Collyer was. There were very few scholars — not as many as now and the Messiah Home children used to come too, then. And the children loved him too. When we used to call the school to order just before church service began, he had always a little children's talk about the lesson, and they all listened with devoted attention and often asked for more.

And how could it be otherwise! We older ones have sat in our pews Sunday after Sunday and felt inspiration flowing to us from that benign countenance. Just to look at him was uplifting. There was always joy and cheer in his message, whether in prayer or sermon, or simply in silence. These last few weeks we have looked upon the lovely white lilies that have occupied the place accustomed to receive the white locks of Our Father Collyer and we in the pews have sensed what it is that we missed. Yet we must not miss him — he would not have us miss him. That was not his way. I once sang at a funeral of a dear friend of his and Dr. Collyer gave to those bereft ones his message of love and hope and even cheer. He would not have us mourn — it was for us to honor him and to honor all that he has been to us by carrying forward that which he would have us do and by giving his cheer and hope and bright outlook upon life to each and all with whom we may come in contact.

BY S. ADOLPHUS KNOPF, M.D.

When I received the invitation to say a few words in memory of Robert Collyer, I felt that it was a great honor to me, and I also felt that it would be very difficult for me to say anything that had not been said before. My only chance of doing so is to let my thoughts take on something of a personal character.

It is my rare privilege to have known Dr. Collyer for wellnigh fifteen years and to have taken him home from church nearly every Sunday during the last few years of his life. Occasionally we used to prolong these delightful and never-to-be-forgotten moments by a ride through the park. To us who were so fortunate as

to pass these happy times in the presence of this unique and lovely personality, it was indeed a great treat. He never failed to tell us an interesting story or relate some appropriate anecdote, and not once do I recall that he repeated any of them. When he left the car, he rarely failed to give us his blessing and more than once smilingly assured me that he would speak a good word for me to St. Peter so that we would be sure to get into heaven.

Of the many interesting stories he told us of his life, two made a particular impression upon me, perhaps because they are related to his early struggle in this country as a stranger in a strange land, in which position I also found myself when I first came to the shores of our great America. This may be the reason why the following little experiences from the life of this great man come to the surface of my mind when so many perhaps more dramatic ones lie dormant and out of the immediate reach of my memory.

He related the story that once on a very hot day, when he was walking over a dusty road from Philadelphia to a near-by place where he had been promised employment, he was overtaken by a gentleman sitting in an elegant carriage, driving a pair of spirited horses. The gentleman halted and asked the young blacksmith where he was going. Learning that it was in the same direction in which he was about to drive, he asked Robert Collyer to enter the carriage. To the young immigrant this was a strange experience. Never in his life had he met with such hospitality, and in telling us the story he added that he did not think this could ever have happened to him in the old country. In my early wanderings I too experienced and was made happy

and comfortable more than once by this genuine American hospitality, and I can well imagine how deeply grateful young Collyer must have felt on that hot summer day for the privilege of riding to his destination.

An almost identical experience with that related by Dr. Collyer was the cause of my meeting my preceptor and benefactor, the physician and friend who in later years made me his junior partner. It was on a very hot day, in the very sunny climate of southern California, when walking through dust an inch or more deep to the distant Los Angeles County Hospital, that an incident happened which proved of great moment in my professional career. As I was plodding along a gentleman in an elegant carriage overtook me, and stopping his horse asked me where I was going. I told him my destination. His was the same. He invited me to enter his carriage, and from that day I became the pupil of Dr. Hubert Nadeau and he became a fatherly friend to whom I am in no small degree indebted for whatever little success I may have attained in life.

A second story, which perhaps only those who have lived in foreign lands can fully appreciate, is the following one which he told us on one of his last rides through the park. The leaves of the trees showed their beautiful autumn coloring, and changing his usual tone of mirth, to one of earnestness, he said, "When a lad in Yorkshire, I used to become melancholy when autumn came and the leaves began to wither. I have never felt that way since I came to America and saw how beautiful the trees turned in the autumn." This was only three weeks before he was taken ill, but I little thought then that it was the last fall he would

see upon this earth. I shall never see another one myself without thinking of the beautiful inspiration this great yet simple man could always draw from nature in all her moods.

I desire to relate one more incident which showed his abiding faith in the immortality of the soul. It was only a few weeks before his last illness when I happened to have as my guest a distinguished German colleague, an eminent physician and also a deep thinker on the many problems of life. While riding home from church we spoke of the hereafter and the destiny of the soul. It was my friend's conviction that with leaving this body, our souls would be absorbed by the great universal intelligence and our individuality would be lost forever. He spoke in German and I repeated his remarks to Dr. Collyer in English, who smiled but did not enter into an argument. All he said was, " I should like to be somebody there just as much as here, and I know I shall be."

And now, since he has departed and has entered into that glorious world where he is surely somebody as he was somebody here, what can I say about what he has been to me as a friend, guide, inspiration, and example? While he was still alive, I had occasion, in an after-dinner address, to pay him my tribute. I have read over what I said then and I find that to-day I cannot say anything different. To me Dr. Collyer was a man beyond criticism. His preaching used to seem to me like a talk of comfort, encouragement, and hope from a loving father to his children who lacked the beautiful spirit of trust in God, trust in mankind, trust in the present and in the future which he had in abundance. Whenever I think of Dr. Collyer I am

reminded of his favorite quotation: "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." Compared with this venerable sage, I am of course a relatively young man and I liked nothing better than when he called me "My son." Yet I have lived half a century and have met a goodly number of men and women in all walks of life, but I do not remember ever to have met a man so universally beloved and honored, not only by his own people but by multitudes of people of the two great English speaking countries. He had no enemies — only friends and admirers. Whenever he is spoken of, whether by Unitarians or people of other beliefs or of no beliefs, they speak of him with affection, admiration, and veneration. His sermons were spiritual messages of peace, love, and kindness; his prayers the outpouring of a heart full of love for God and men; his benedictions came from on high; and his smile, which those who have ever seen it will never forget, was like a glimpse into the gates of heaven.

These are essentially the words I spoke at the dinner above referred to which was given in honor of "Our Ministers." Good Dr. Collyer could not be present. I sent him the manuscript of my little address the next day, and here is the letter which he wrote in his own strong hand in answer to it:

New York, Feb. 21, 1912.

"Dear Friend and Dear Doctor:

"When I read your report of the brief address to the Club, touching the ministers, my own heart was moved in the reading as I am sure yours was in the speaking, and my old eyes were dim not with age. Many words have been said to me and about me here

and in my mother land, but no words more sweet and tender. Forty-two years ago come May I was invited to preach the sermon before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in London to my wonder, and I confess my dismay. I went over with my heart in my mouth, as we say, and still remember my great welcome and the words that were said matched these you say now — except that I was then in my full prime. I mind well also how in my prime I would wonder how I should fare in my old age if I was spared to be laid on the shelf. Well, here I am among the oldest and the happiest old men in our city, with your address under my left elbow, and can think of no finer boon than that you shall reach your eighty-ninth year and be as hale and hearty as I am, with the dear good wife and good friends past numbering. Bear with my dim old eyes that have missed the line, and believe me

" Your grateful friend and Pastor Emeritus,
" Robert Collyer, Litt.D., D.D., 1823-1912."

I have in my possession no document or autograph, no gift of gold or silver, which I treasure more highly than this letter written during the last year of the life of our saint.

In conclusion, let me tell you of a tribute paid to Dr. Collyer by an entire stranger who had met him but once and only for a very short time and who, for the first time in his life, had been in a Unitarian church. I refer to the German gentleman above mentioned, my friend, Dr. Ernst Diesing of Hamburg, whom I had notified of the passing away of our beloved Pastor Emeritus. Here is what he wrote:

"The news of the death of your venerable Pastor fills me with sadness. From the short conversation I had with him and the few expressions of his opinion on the vital problems of life I was privileged to listen to, I feel that he was a man of great nobility of character, of unusual world wisdom, and of great goodness of heart. His remarkable and eventful life shows him to have been a man of surpassing spirituality and loveliness, yet great strength of character. I know of no priest or minister of any denomination throughout the great German Empire who could be called the equal of your great Dr. Collyer, nor have I found in the Fatherland a Christian congregation or sect, which has for its precepts so much Christianity, such a wise, practical, and enlightened interpretation of men's religious and social obligations, and such large-hearted tolerance towards others, as your Unitarian Church.

"On my return home I told our minister what I had heard and seen on that delightful Sunday in your church, how and what your ministers preached and what they prayed for, and how deeply I was impressed by the words said to me by Dr. Collyer. My pastor listened attentively, seemed embarrassed and said nothing. But from his sermon on the following Sunday I could see what a deep impression the narrative of my American religious experience had made upon him. He spared us that Sunday; instead of discussing dogma and expounding orthodoxy he spoke as a man to men but in a Godlike spirit."

It is hard to conceive of a greater tribute from a stranger in a strange land to our great departed minister and to the church over which he presided and

whose destiny he shaped for over thirty-five years. Robert Collyer has justly been called an "athlete of God," an eloquent preacher, and a wonderful religious teacher. In all these ways he attained greatness, but to my mind in none more than as an example to, and an inspirer of, men to do the work of God on earth.

BY WILLIAM M. BRUNDAGE

I FEEL particularly indebted to Dr. Collyer for the great help he afforded me at an important period of my religious life. I had reached the point where it was impossible for me to remain in the orthodox church in which I was born, and continue to be an honest man. But where should I go? I needed a fellowship that would grant me perfect liberty of thought; that went without the saying. But I wanted a fellowship that would help to foster the religious life I possessed; I did not desire to join a liberal body that was not profoundly religious in the best sense of the term. I was told by persons who pretended to know that I would not be likely to find either of these requirements in the Unitarian Church.

I had known Dr. Collyer, and had enjoyed the privilege of entertaining him in my own home some years before. I therefore wrote him and asked him if I might come to New York and consult with him. He wrote me a cordial invitation to come.

I put to him these questions as to one well qualified to help me, for he had once belonged to the church of which I was a minister.

"Freedom in our Unitarian body? My dear brother, I have found perfect freedom. We have no

orthodoxy of any sort to defend, not even a liberal orthodoxy. The brethren have all been so kind to me and have put up with all my foolish idiosyncrasies. The only trouble with us is that we are a little too free. And religion? Bless your soul, I think that I knew what religion was in the old church which we both love, but I have found just as warm a religion among our Unitarian people. They may not say quite so much about it; but they live it."

Freedom and religion in perfect union — no one ever realized in his personal life this rare combination to a greater degree than did Robert Collyer. It has been my privilege to spend with him two weeks at a time at the residence of a mutual friend in the country, and to discuss at our leisure all sorts of questions, and I have never known him to manifest the least impatience with anyone, no matter how widely he differed from him. He respected every man's honest opinion. You never felt that he merely tolerated you; he sympathized with you, and respected you. He granted you the same liberty he claimed for himself. I never knew him to become heated in an argument. He believed so confidently that the truth would finally prevail that he could afford to be perfectly patient. In this connection I have often thought of that passage of Isaiah, "He that believeth shall not make haste."

There is a quality of character that is supposed to have been peculiarly characteristic of the ancient Greek, the radiant joy of life. With this joy, however, there did not always go the tenderest sympathy with all suffering. No ancient Greek ever possessed a more radiant joy of life than did Dr. Collyer, and yet there

was no trace of hardness or lack of tenderness in his joy.

But once in all the years I knew him did I ever witness the clouding of that joy. Four years ago last March, on the eve of a long absence from New York, I called to see him in his Broadway study to bid him good-by. He was among his books, but he was not reading. The Monday before we had missed him from our weekly Ministers' Meeting, and we had learned that he was not well.

"I am not ill," he said, in answer to my inquiries, "but I am growing old. Brother Brundage, it is a hard thing to grow old." And his eyes moistened as he grasped me warmly by the hand. But when he saw how ill and troubled I was, his generous kindliness banished his own mood of depression, his native hopefulness and buoyancy of spirit reasserted themselves, and he sought to cheer and comfort me. Six months later when I saw him again his joy of life was as radiant as of old. If for the moment he had faltered, he had won a still more glorious victory, the victory of faith.

BY LEON A. HARVEY

THERE are certain memories of Dr. Collyer's life that I always like to touch. I pass over all the familiar romance of his early days, as my word to-night must be brief, and I come first of all to the wonderful story of his entrance into the Unitarian ministry, after his many years of lay preaching in England and here in America. Lucretia Mott, the great Quaker leader of the antislavery forces, met him and heard him, and

introduced him to Dr. Furness of Philadelphia. Shortly after the beginning of this friendship, the Unitarian churches in Chicago wanted a minister-at-large to look after the city's poor and unfortunate. Dr. Furness recommended his new-found apostle, Collyer, who was invited and went. Later on, when one of the churches was without a minister, he supplied, just to fill the gap, and they called him. The responsibility frightened him. He was a blacksmith, while his associates were educated men — university men! "In a year," he said to Mrs. Collyer, "I shall run dry and have nothing to say."—"Ah, man," she retorted in the Yorkshire dialect, "it's not a cistern ye ha' inside o' ye, it's a spring." And so to his own astonishment it proved.

Then comes a second memory, the story of the War. In April 1861, Fort Sumter was fired upon and the trumpet-call for troops was sounded. The blacksmith preacher had in two short years of service become the first voice in the growing city in all matters of public concern. He was still as he began, the "minister-at-large." His text the next Sunday morning was this, "Let him that is without a sword, sell his garment and buy one." It was a summons which those who heard never could forget. Sunday after Sunday the word rang out from his pulpit which fired men's hearts for the mighty conflict. When it came, and there was need for what we have come to know as Red Cross work, Robert Collyer went to the front. And then he would go back now and then and tell the people what he had done with the sums committed to his charge and how he had nursed and comforted as he could. Here is just one little incident which is an in-

dex to the rest. He is on a Mississippi steamboat taking the wounded to a hospital: —

"Here is a man I must attend to who has lost his arm and is sinking into the shadows, and as I lay cool wet linen on the stump, he tells me in broken sentences he has left a wife and two young children at home he will never see again, and gives me a glance into his brave soul in asking what hope there may be for him when he passes through the gates. He has always tried to do right he says, and be a man, but never professed religion. 'You will go right home to God your Father and mine,' I told him, 'never you fear.' With some more words from my heart he is comforted, and as I come and go I watch the face grow white. He is very quiet now. I asked a good sweet Presbyterian deacon, a neighbor of ours in the city, to watch with him. The noble soul is quite of my mind about the future for such a man, and when all is over he comes to tell me how he had put up the one hand gently when the end came and closed his own eyes, and then laid the hand softly on his breast and was no more, no more, and yet forevermore." You see, do you not, how such a preacher touched the hearts of the people at home and how both his Church and his city emptied their purses to supply him and his "Sanitary" helpers with funds. After the war was over hundreds told how tender was his touch when he played the nurse's part, and how his shining face and words of courage and cheer seemed like a benediction from on high. This he did on the battle field and in the hospital, and in the city his moving appeals brought helpers and supplies.

When at last the grim struggle was over he turned back to his beloved church, to find the bonds had

strengthened between him and his people and that somehow his name and word had gone over the whole nation he had sought to serve. Calls came from the Second Church in Brooklyn and from Theodore Parker's Church in Boston. The invitation to the latter post was signed by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Wendell Phillips. But none of these things, and he knew how great the honor was, moved him. His work was in Chicago. The people sent him to England to rest, while they built a new and larger church. And here let me tell some of the things which befell him in England on that visit and on later ones. He found his good mother who had made a family of seven comfortable on $4.50 a week sitting in the same old chair he remembered as a boy and as she greeted him the tears ran down her fine old face. It was from her, Dr. Bellows said after seeing her, that Robert got his outfit. In the fields and hamlets there for weeks he was a boy again. It was on a later visit that the following incident occurred. He was famous now on both sides of the sea and a Mr. Ellis, a good Unitarian squire invited him to dine in a great handsome manor house, where Queen Elizabeth was once entertained. In his "Memories" he says: "I was glad to go. And as we sat on the lawn under a grand old tree, chatting of many things, my good host said: 'I have been told, sir, by your friend that you emigrated from Yorkshire to the United States. My family came south from Yorkshire many years ago, where my father was partner in a linen factory. The firm was Colbeck and Ellis, the factory was in Fewston. You may have heard of the place.' 'Yes,' I answered. 'I worked in that factory many years in my boyhood. My father

was the smith there and worked in the factory, boy and man for thirty-two years. He was brought down from London and was bound apprentice to your father and Mr. Colbeck in the year 1807.' So there we sat, the sons of the master and the apprentice after eighty years with a good warm grip of the hands."

It was on this later visit too that a long-cherished dream came true. He had not breathed his wish to anyone, but he wanted above all things else to preach in his old home church in Addingham, at Ilkley where he worked at the forge. And strangely enough, invitations came from all the former Methodist pulpits and he gladly accepted. On this later visit too he went to see an iron gate which he had made while working at the forge and, though fifty years had gone, not a rivet had given way. He had been faithful in the little things and mayhap that led the way to all the good things that had come to him.

One other thing came out of England, and that is the story of the factory bell. It used to wake him when a boy of eight at 5:30 in the morning that he might be at the factory at six — no wonder its tones were harsh. But the years had softened the memory and when the factory was torn down Mr. Collyer wrote and asked that if the bell were broken up a piece of it should be sent to him. For answer the bell was sent express paid to the door. What should he do with it? Well, up at Cornell University where he talked once a year to the students he told of the rivets that had not started and of the bell for which he had no use. It happened they were building there a shop where boys should be taught various trades and on the shop they needed a bell. So it was given and in another year

they summoned him to come and ring the first stroke on the bell he had given — and lo! as he struck it the tones were silver clear and all their harshness gone. And still it calls, as it will do through the years, and it may be centuries, to come, happy workers to the shop which adds new dignity to toil.

Let us go back now with him to Chicago after that first happy visit to the mother-land. The church they built was filled Sunday after Sunday for six happy years. Then came the great fire of 1871 when a large portion of the city of Chicago was destroyed and with it nine-tenths of the homes of Mr. Collyer's people, together with the church so recently built. Five times that fearful day the Collyer family moved to see the house they left swept by the rushing flames. One refuge had been the church. At last a house separated by a little lake sheltered them. And now we come to what is perhaps the supreme moment of this poet-preacher's life. How should he meet his people and what could he say to them? The question was no sooner asked than answered. They would meet in front of the place where the church had stood on the next Sunday at 11 o'clock, and so they did. They opened their service with the hymn:

> "Before Jehovah's awful throne,
> Ye nations bow with sacred joy,
> Know that the Lord is God alone,
> He can create and He destroy."

For Scripture he found in Isaiah the words, "Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant things

are laid waste," and then as the tears flowed down their cheeks, the stricken people sang again:

> " When Israel of the Lord beloved
> Out of the land of bondage came,
> Her father's God before her moved,
> An awful guide in smoke and flame."

Then the preacher spoke to the people, finding like Bunyan's Christian a key of Hope in his bosom which unlocked for them the dungeon of Giant Despair. He told them that they must pay him no stipend for the year, that he could care for his family at the anvil if need be, and they must rebuild as soon as possible. When he was done the people voted " with something like a shout of gladness " to do as he proposed.

But this man was not simply the preacher to a single congregation, he was still the " minister-at-large." His words spoken in front of the charred building were telegraphed all over the world. In response one man asked the privilege of paying Collyer's salary for a year and sent the first quarter's pay. Another sent 1,400 loaves of bread for distribution which the Relief Association accepted. England sent him funds; and of the $5,000,000 which the stricken received no small part was sent in his name or as he directed. The city loved and trusted him and a nation responded to his appeals. Cornell University wrote that they had a thousand dollars for him if he would make and send them a horseshoe, which you may be sure he did.

As I have told this remarkable story I am sure the life has interpreted itself. At his funeral Mr. Holmes with consummate insight said that Collyer had at once

the simplicity of a child, the tenderness of a woman, and the strength of a man. All these elements were so blended in him that touch him where you will, humanity is there.

Because he was thus humanity incarnate he knew how to interpret human life. He found this interpretation in the eyes of children, in the faces of strong men and women and he found it too in the pages of the world's best books — for he had learned that here is not only the distilled wisdom of the ages but here too is the insight which glorifies our poor dull lives with the ideals and hopes which have stirred the noblest souls in their search for the true, the beautiful, and the good. These great souls, as well as men and women whom he knew, became his companions and intimate friends. It is good to think of him in these last years in that Broadway study surrounded by the books he loved and to know that after the fire in Chicago a friend in England asked him to write out a list of the lost books, and when this was done a copy of every one was found and sent to him. These were the books upon which his eyes rested with singular affection as he told me the story a year ago, and there I like to leave him with gratitude in his great heart for all his friends and a love for books and the treasures which they hold lending to his fine old face that hint of immortality which is better than any other proof.

BY JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

THERE is little that I can say here to-night in addition to what I have already said, first at Dr. Collyer's funeral, and secondly at the service held in his memory on December 8th last. I would, however, express my

joy that this meeting was held by the men of our church, and my great satisfaction that we have here an organization which bears his honored name. I well remember how delighted he was when he heard that our new society had voted to call itself the Robert Collyer Men's Club. You will remember also how graciously he expressed his delight to us in that ever-memorable evening some seven or eight months ago, when he sat here on this platform surrounded by a great clustering circle of our members like an ancient sage with his band of followers, and reviewed for us the sweet memories of his romantic career. I think it pleased him to know that he was not forgotten with the advent of the new minister — and to realize that, long after he had passed away, his name would be associated with, and perpetuated in, the work of such an organization as this. This Club of ours is still so new, that it may scarcely be said to have found itself; but that its members chose to unite themselves under Dr. Collyer's name and were so fortunate as to have received at its very birth, so to speak, the baptism of his spirit, gives springs of strength which must endure. That we may be worthy of this great heritage must be our one prayer at this hour.

My relations with Dr. Collyer, through the nearly six years of our association together, were so close and tender that I can scarcely trust myself to speak of them in any such public place as this. I have referred to them more than once, since the Doctor passed away, but have never given anything more than the faintest suggestion of what they were and what they meant to me as a young man and a young minister. Of one fact I cannot refrain from speaking again, in spite of its

personal nature — partly because of what it meant to me, but more because of what it reveals of him.

I refer to the attitude which he always took toward me as his successor, or associate, in the ministry of this church. It would have been perfectly natural, to my mind, if, after thirty years of service here, he had still exercised, more or less, the functions of leadership, and left me to adapt myself to his wishes and habits as best I could. I should never have blamed him, I think, if he had put me into the position of a subordinate — nor do I think that I would ever have had the heart to object. Nothing of this sort, however, ever occurred. From the very beginning of our association together, he took the position that I was the minister of the church — that I must lead and he follow — I speak and he obey — and never once in all these years, did he deviate from this attitude. So far from commanding and interfering, he never even advised or suggested, unless I specifically sought his counsel. For months after my advent, he never once offered to take any part of the morning service until I had requested him to do so — and in later years he fell into the habit of taking the responses and prayers unbidden only because he had come to see that this was my desire always. Never but once did he ask to preach — and this once sought my permission with the utmost scrupulousness. At all other times he preached only when I had personally invited him. Still more remarkable, to my mind, was the way in which he refrained from all criticism of my radical utterances with which he could not agree. I believe, to my own deep pain, that he was oftentimes grieved and perhaps alarmed — his very silence, in such sharp contrast to

his open-hearted enthusiasm when anything pleased him, now and then betrayed unwittingly his inward trouble of mind and heart. But never once did he criticise, or even proffer any word of doubt or caution. I would not have you infer from all this that he effaced himself in the sense that he withdrew from active work in the church or from active support of my labors. On the contrary, he was busy with us, as you know, to the very end; and gave to me such love and loyalty as have blessed the lives of few of you. I only mean to indicate that, in the face of every conscious and unconscious temptation to do otherwise, he deliberately yielded his place of leadership to me — let the church be mine for the doing of my own work in my own way. It was almost embarrassing to one of my years to have this great and venerable man thus efface himself — but it strengthened me also. It gave me a fair chance to win or lose on my own responsibility. And, may I add, it gave me a feeling that he trusted me! To hear him speak of me, as he always did in public, as "my minister," at once lifted and humbled me beyond words to express.

Now in saying all this I have been very personal. But I have felt that I could not use this opportunity better than by telling this little secret. Nothing in all Dr. Collyer's life shows more convincingly his broadness of mind, bigness of heart, and greatness of soul, than this last episode of all.

It is just in such a relation as was ours that most old men — nay, most men, young or old! fail, but it was just here that he succeeded.

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